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How Allen Dulles Tried to Spare Ike

By Marquis Childs

AS THEY sat in the garden of the British Embassy in Paris, looking out at the lovely prospect of smooth green-sward walled away from the city's surging traffic, President Eisenhower told Prime Minister Macmillan something of the ordeal he had been through over the shooting down of the U-2 espionage plane.



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It was the first opportunity that they had to talk reflectively about the fearful events which had destroyed the hopes of both men for the beginning of a peaceful settlement between East and West. Among other things the President told the Prime Minister was that at the height of the furor over the U-2 Allen Dulles had offered to resign as director of the Central Intelligence Agency if this would make the President's task of decision any easier.

But the President, as he explained it to Macmillan, put aside this offer. Many elements in a complex relationship were involved in the decision. Loyalty to Dulles was one. More important was the President's emotional reaction involving his own necessity to take responsibility before the world for what had happened.

In actual fact, inquiry in Washington suggests that the President in his talk with the British Prime Minister rather overstated the case. Dulles did not offer to resign as head of CIA, since he believed this would be running away from responsibility. What he did propose was to resign as a dramatic

DULLES TOLD the President that he was prepared to accept full and public responsibility for the U-2 flight if this would simplify the President's problem on the eve of the summit conference. It had been, as Dulles well knew, a shared responsibility. Yet, as the No. 1 figure in intelligence, Dulles was willing to make himself if the President considered it vital, the target of attack by the Soviet Union and the sole author of the flight and its timing.

This avowal would have unquestionably brought down a storm on Dulles' head, with attack at home as well as abroad. It could even have forced his resignation from the CIA. But whatever the risks involved he was willing to accept them if this could in any way alleviate a crisis as grave as any the United States had faced since the end of the war.

By one of those strange coincidences of history the involvement with Allen Dulles came just one year after the President had gone through perhaps the greatest emotional wrench of his tenure of the White House with the illness and death of John Foster Dulles. Having delegated more authority over foreign policy to Dulles than probably any other Secretary of State has ever exercised, the President found it difficult to reconcile himself to his disappearance from the scene. It was grudgingly and almost by default that Eisenhower named Christian A. Herter, Dulles' deputy, as his successor.

IT WAS natural then that the President in this latest and gravest crisis should find a Dulles at his side. While his dedication to government service and to the cause of the free world is at least as great as that of his older brother, Allen Dulles has a different exterior and a different approach. He has a sense of humor, he is more urbane, he is less dogmatic and more of a pragmatist.

As head of the CIA he has had remarkable success in fighting off congressional watchdog committees that would monitor the activities of his far-flung agency. The proposal of Sen. Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) for such supervision was defeated, 59 to 27, four years ago.

The London Observer published recently a searching profile on Dulles that was on the whole favorable. But it stated what is only said in private here—that the CIA runs its own foreign policy in many parts of the world. Conspicuously this has been true, according to the article, in Laos and Egypt. It stated without qualification that the CIA has been sending U-2 flights over China from bases in Formosa. Sources within the Soviet delegation were saying in Paris that Moscow has knowledge of such flights occurring over Red China after May 1.

In the history of the times both John Foster and Allen will have a prominent part, but it is too early to appraise their respective roles. And certainly it is too soon even to guess at how Allen Dulles will look when, and if, the whole picture of the U-2 is finally known.